

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4028
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AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 6236

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PRESIDENT MORO

SUMMARY: ON APRIL 14, I CALLED ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) PRESEIDENT ALDO MORO IN HIS PRIVATE OFFICE FOR A FRUITFUL HOUR-AND-HALF EXCHANGE ON US POLICY TOWARD ITALY AND THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. MORO SPOKE WARMLY OF HIS (AND THE DC'S) CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE US. HE FINDS BOTH THE DC AND THE COMMUNISTS IN AN /UNCOMFORTABLE" POSITION WHICH HE MAINTAINS MIGHT TAKE TWO YEARS TO CLARIFY. THE TRICK WILL BE TO PRESERVE THE "FRAGILE" BALANCE WITHOUT RESORT TO HARMFUL NEW ELECTIONS BY FINDING EXPEDIENT WAYS TO "SATISFY" COMMUNIST PRESSURES FOR FORWARD MOVEMENT. HE COMMENTED INTERESTINGLY ONHARDLINE PRESSURES EXERTED ON THE BERLINGUER LEADERSHIP AND SPECULATED ON FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN REDICAL STUDENT GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

1. I BEGAN THE CONVERSATION BY OUTLINING IN SOME DETAIL THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARD ITALY. I EMPHASIZED THAT NONINVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESSES BY WHICH ITALIANS MAKE THEIR SOVEREIGN
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POLITICAL DECISIONS DOES NOT MEAN INDIFFERENCE TO THE CHOICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE. WE WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE OUR STRONG PREFERENCE AND SUPPORT KNOWN FOR GOVERNMENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH ARE GENUINELY COMMITTED TO WESTERN DEMOCRATIC VALUES. I TOLD MORO VERY FRANKLY THAT WE DID NOT CONSIDER THE PCI TO MEET THIS STANDARD. I ALSO EXPLAINED THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE PRESI-

DENT'S DECISION TO BRING OUR VISA LAW INTO HARMONY WITH OUR DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS AND HELSINKI UNDERTAKINGS, AS WELL AS OUR DESIRE TO EXPAND CONTACTS WITH THE PCI IN A CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, PRUDENT AND GRADUAL MANNER SO AS NOT TO PROVIDE AN ERRONEOUS POLITICAL SIGNAL. ASKED FOR HIS COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS, MORO SAID THAT HE REGARDED THE POLICIES I OUTLINES AS BOTH "CORRECT" AND "UNOBJECTIONABLE." HE ALLOWED THAT THEY NONETHELESS WOULD PROVIDE THE IMPRESSION OF SOME CHANGE ("A SMALL STEP") WITH RESPECT TO THE FORMER US POSITION.

2. IN IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, MORO PROVIDED A FRANK AND COMPREHENSIVE APPRAISAL OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS EXCEEDINGLY "FRAGILE." HOWEVER, WHILE THE PRESSURES ON THE ARIUS POLITICAL PARTIES MADE FOR DANGEROUS INSTABILITY, MORO GAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SITUATION WAS HOPELESS OR OUT OF CONTROL. IN FACT, IT WAS HIS UNDERLYING PREMISE THAT BOTH THE DC AND PCI EMERGED FROM LAST JUNE'S ELECTIONS SUFFERING A CERTAIN DEGREE OF "PARALYZING" RESTRAINT AND DISCOMFORT. ALTHOUGH THE DC "MIRACULOUSLY" REMAINED THE PARTY OF THE RELATIVE MAJORITY, ITS INABILITY TO FORM A COALITION WITH ITS TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ALLIES FORCED IT TO CONCEDE THE PCI'S DETERMINING ABSTENTION. WHILE THIS SITUATION CAUSES THE DC A GOOD DEAL OF "DISCOMFORT," MORO SAID THAT THE PCI FINDS ITSELF IN A SITUATION AT LEAST EQUALLY DISCOMFORTING SINCE, DESPITE ITS ELECTORAL GAINS, IT NEEDS THE DC'S ACCORD TO ADVANCE ITS POLITICAL AIMS. CONFIDENTIAL

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AT PRESENT, EACH PARTY CANNOT DO WITHOUT THE OTHER.

3. MORO SAID THAT SO FAR THE PCI'S ATTITUDE HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS, ALTHOUGH THE LEADERSHIP NOW APPEARS TO BE UNDER INCREASED HARDLINE PRESSURES TO SUPPORT PROPOSALS FOR A LARGER ROLE IN GOVERNMENT. HE INTERESTINGLY SAID THAT IT WAS THE SOCIALISTS WHO WERE PUSHING HARDEST NOW FOR A CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. IT WAS THE PSI'S STRATEGY (ZPOSSIBLY VALID BUT DANGEROUS") TO CAPTURE VOTES FROM THE PCI BY HAVING THAT PARTY DISCREDITED AS A PARTY OF GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO SUPPORT DC PROGRAMS. MORO SAID THAT THE PCI LEADERSHIP FELT COMPELLED TO SUPPORT THE PSI'S CURRENT INITIATIVE (ALTHOUGH NOT OUT OF CONVICTION) IN RESPONSE TO DEMANDS FROM HARDLINERS WHO FEAR THAT THE PCI'S POSITION, "AFTER COMING SO FAR," IS ERODING. MORO SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO CADRE DISCONTENT (WORKER AND YOUTH) WHICH IS CAUSING BERLINGUER "SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES" AS OPPOSED TO THE PCI'S ELECTORATE "WHO DO NOT VOTE FOR

MOSCOW". HE SAID THAT BERLINGUER WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "SINCERE") HAD GONE VERY FAR AND "DOES NOT KNOW WHERE HE WILL END UP".

4. MORO SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER PCI LEADERS ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO SOVIET OR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PRESSURES. HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT RECENT PCI STATEMENTS (HE CITED COSSUTA AND RADICE AS WELL AS BERLINGUER HIMSELF) "SOUND MUCH LESS INDEPENDENT". THE PCI IS ALSO PARTICULARLY DISQUIETED BY THE FACT THAT THE NEW RADICAL STUDENT MOVEMENTS HAVE "A STRONG ANTI-PCI ACCENT." MORO SAID THAT HOW THESE GROUPS AROSE IS FAR FROM CLEAR. HE SPOKE OF "RUMORS" THAT SOME OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE RECENT BOLOGNA STUDENT RIOTS HAD CZECH PASSPORTS. WHEN I ASKED WHY THE CZECHS WOULD GET INVOLVED, MORO OPINED THAT PRO-SOVIET ELEMENTS WOULD BE STRENGTHENED BY CAUSING DIFFI-
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CULTIES FOR BERLINGUER. MORO SAID THAT EVEN WHILE APPARENTLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE PCI, THESE GROUPS ALSO SERVED TO PROMOTE COMMUNIST INTERESTS BY CREATING A CLIMATE OF DISORDER AND CONFUSION, THEREBY ENHANCING POPULAR DEMANDS FOR PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT.

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5. MORO SAID NO SOLUTION YET EXISTS TO THE CURRENT IMPASSE. ALTHOUGH THE PSI IS BASICALLY "ATLANTICIST" AND DEMOCRATIC, ITS INTERNAL "CONTRADICTIONS" WILL PREVENT IF "FOR A LONG TIME" FROM PARTICIPATING IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH EXCLUDES THE PCI. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT HAS FUNCTIONED AS BEST AS POSSIBLE ON A "DAY-TO-DAY" BASIS. THE CURRENT WAVE OF VIOLENCE, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE POLITICAL KIDNAPPING OF PSI LEADER DEMARTINO'S SONE, AGGRAVATES THE SITUATION. MORO ALSO LAMENTED THAT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SECURITY SERVICES IN A POLITICAL POLEMIC OVER REFORMS HAS "PRACTICALLY NEUTRALIZED" THEIR EFFECTIVENESS.

6. IN VIEW OF THIS SITUATION, A PROGRAM CONSENSUS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO GOVERN. THE DC HAS STATED ITS READINESS TO FIND "PROGRAMMATIC CONVERGENCIES ON THINGS TO BE DONE" PROVIDED THAT IT DOES CHANGE THE "POLITICAL FRAMEWORK". MORO SAID THAT WHAT THE "POLITICAL FRAMEWORK" ACTUALLY CONSISTS OF, HOWEVER, IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR. HE WAS ADAMANT, THOUGH, THAT A PROGRAM CONSENSUS WOULD NOT BE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSTITUTE A "POLITICAL ALLIANCE". THE SITUATION WAS FRAGILE FOR IF THE PCI, JOINED BY THE PSI, REPUBLICANS AND OTHERS, PUSHED TOO HARD, THE POLITICAL BALANCE COULD BE SHATTERED. THIS WOULD LEAD TO NEW ELECTIONS AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE. MORO SAID THAT WHEREAS THE DC WOULD GAIN, THE PCI WOULD ALSO, BOTH AT THE UNDESIRABLE EXPENSE OF THE MINOR PARTIES. NEW ELECTIONS WOULD LEAVE THE SITUATION UNCHANGED OR WORSE.

7. CHARACTERIZING THE DC AS BEING ON THE "RAZOR'S EDGE", MORO SAID THE PARTY MUST FIND WAYS TO SATISFY THE PCI AND PSI FOR AS MUCH AS THE NEXT TWO YEARS UNTIL CONDITIONS COULD BE TURNED AROUND IN THE DC'S FAVOR. MORO SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT "EXPEDIENTS" WILL BE NECESSARY TO KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. TIME WAS NEEDED FOR THE DC TO REGAIN PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE AND TO STRENGTHEN THE SOCIALISTS TO PERMIT THEM TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE ONCE AGAIN. MORO ALSO SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT IN TIME VOTERS WOULD FIND THE DC'S OLD ELECTORAL WARNINGS ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE PCI WITH DEMOCRACY AGAIN CONVINCING. HE SUGGESTED THAT ALREADY EVIDENT DISAPPOINTMENT WITH PCI LOCAL ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO REASSESSMENT OF THE PCI'S EFFICIENCY.

8. COMMENT: MORO'S MANNER WAS GRACIOUS AND HIS COMMENTS WERE BOTH FORTHCOMING AND FRANK. HE SPOKE ESPECIALLY WARMLY OF HIS LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES AND HIS (AND THE DC'S) FIRM COMMITMENT TO ITALY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US THROUGH NATO.HE SEEMED GENUINELY INTERESTED IN RENEWING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH US AND QUICKLY RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY TO MY SUGGESTION THAT WE MIGHT GET TOGETHER FROM TIME TO TIME OVER LUNCH OR DINNER TO CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATIONS.GARNDER
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Message Attributes

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